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Shah of Iran – efforts towards democracy and modernism

Year 1979 Iran was shaken and destroyed by a west-made Islamic-communistic revolution. An imperial Iran was transformed into a fundamental Islamic Iran and the world was set off for a gloomy epoch consisting of future threats, terror, murder and fear. Before the revolution Iran was guided by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi – the Shah of Iran – and the country was on its way toward industrialism, modernism and most important of all, democracy.

A charismatic leader

October 26, 1919 a boy was born with the faith to lead a primitive country toward modernism, democracy and industrialism. The boy was none other than Mohammad Reza and the nation was none other than Iran. Mohammad Reza became Iran's formal crown prince in December 1925. Sixteen years later that is year 1941, in spite of the sabotage of the imperialist powers, but by the request of the Iranian people, he became Iran's new Shah after his father Reza Shah Pahlavi the Great. Reza Shah the Great had abdicated after pressure and compulsion from the allied occupants during the Second World War.

When Mohammad Reza took over after his father, Iran was in a very trying situation when it came to both the policy as well as the economy in the country. The north part of the country was occupied by the Soviet Union, which was trying to separate the Iranian Azarbaijan and Kurdistan. The south part of the country was occupied by the British, who controlled the Persian Gulf and Iran's oil. As a true, faithful and loyal father, the Shah faced the problems and solved them one by one and liberated Iran from the hands of the occupants through active diplomacy and strong leadership, even though being very young. At the same time, his support rose day by day among the Iranian people, who were longing for better social circumstances and independence.

The Shah's leadership can be summarised in two main points: nationalism and modernism. By strengthening the Iranian nationalism and give the Iranian people their self-confidence and self-assurance back, he wanted to modernise and democratise his country, which had during a long time been oppressed by foreign occupation forces. It's important to underline that the Iranian nationalism has nothing to do with racism, xenophobia and chauvinism. The Iranian nationalism has always consisted of hospitality and respect for other cultures and countries.

Reform toward modernism and democracy

In order to guide his country toward modernism, the Shah started encouraging the Majles, the Iranian parliament, to start off different reforms. The most famous reforms, which were started on the Shah's initiative, were the reforms which were part of the so called "White Revolution" and began during the 60s. The result of the White Revolution was, if you conclude it in seven simple words, *increased democracy and modernism for the Iranians*.

The revolution led among other things to that woman received the right to vote, even though facing huge resistance and sabotage from the Islamists and this is something which can be compared to the situation for women in today's Saudi-Arabia where the women still don't have the right to vote. The fact that women received the right to vote during the 60s, might not be regarded as anything special for those who have been born or raised in the Western World and have had this right for some time now. However, in Iran this was a huge event considering the religion, Islam, which was practised in the country. This was one of many the great steps toward not only democracy, but also equality and modernism.

The result of the revolution meant also a decrease in illiteracy and nobody can deny that there is a strong genuine connection between decreased illiteracy and increased democratisation. Decreased illiteracy leads to an increased society knowledge, which in turn results in equality, democracy and a secular political system. The revolution also abolished the injustice and inhuman feudal system in Iran and the farmers were set free from the tyranny caused by the feudal lord. The workers were also set free from slavery and abuse. These mentioned points were also examples of huge steps toward democracy and modernism.

Iran vs. the Western World

During the Shah's golden time the Iranian economy was radically flourishing and the country had seriously started industrialising. Year 1960 OPEC was established on the Shah's initiative and Iran, together with the other member countries, started controlling their own oil, which decreased the "Seven Sisters" – at that time the worlds' seven most biggest oil companies, including British Petroleum – dominance in the oil market. Year 1973/74 OPEC, once again on the Shah's initiative, increased the oil prices from 4 dollars per drum of oil to 12 dollars and Iran's income from oil and thereby Iran's prosperity, increased greatly. It's important here to know that the "Seven Sisters" had because of their strong economy a great political power and influence. For example, the oil company Exxon, which was part of the "Seven Sisters", had year 1984 a gross selling that was about the same as Sweden's GDP the same year.

Iran's economy had grown so strong that the unemployment in the country had reached zero during the 70s, the illiteracy had decreased drastically, the health of the Iranian people had improved greatly, the material welfare had increased and the poverty had decreased. Year 1975 a new law about social safety network came, which covered more than 6 000 000

individuals. The government's goal was that this new law would cover the whole population before year 1983. The country also started producing petrochemical products, machines, cars etcetera. Iran was a new Japan. Even better than Japan. This was something that without any doubt frightened many countries, especially those in West. Iran had also become the police of the Middle East with its fifth strongest non-nuclear army. Jimmy Carter, ex-president of USA and the Iranian people's enemy number one, claimed that Iran during the leadership of the Shah was "an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world".

The countries in the West, especially the US and UK, could not tolerate Iran's development and therefore they started sabotaging Iran's development. Because of that a conflict between the West and Iran was started. According to the West Iran's flourishing economy and political force threatened the Western World's security. However, the British researcher Barry Buzan, professor in international relations at London School of Economics and Political Science, claims that a countries security can be split into three parts: the state's physical base, the state's idea and the state's institutions. If one of these three parts is under threat, then the rest will also be under threat and domestic political problems will be created. OPEC's control over the oil threatened the West's physical base. The increase of the oil price in the beginning of the 70s led to an unexpected high inflation, unemployment and other economical crises in the West and by those means the West's institutions and values were under threat. The conflict got so serious that the US and UK planned the Shah's downfall and applied it. The product of this conflict was a "bastard" called the Islamic republic, the "mother" was the UK, the "father" was the US, the "brothers" were France and Germany and the "sisters" was Libya, Syria and Palestine.

Iranians left in sorrow

January 16, 1979 the father of Iran left the country with tears in his eyes. July 27, 1980 he closed his eyes forever in Egypt and left the Iranians in great sorrow. Today, after about 28 years with the Islamic republic in power the Shah of Iran is missed more than ever, something which continues growing for each day that passes by. Iranians youths look back at Iran during his time and ask themselves with tears in their eyes, "where were we then and where are we heading now?". That's a question many people ask themselves and each other today. A respected and rich nation has been transformed into a nation know for its creation and support of international terrorism, torture, execution and imprisonment.

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